

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-11 and 12-43 are pending in the present application. Claims 12-43 have been withdrawn from consideration by the Examiner as being drawn to a non-elected invention. Claim 44 has been canceled by the present amendment. Claim 44 was rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Beggiao '892. Claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Beggiao '892 in view of Van de Ven et al. '974.

With respect to the rejection of claim 44 under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Beggiao '892, in order to reduce the outstanding issues and expedite prosecution in the present application, the present amendment cancels claim 44. Accordingly, this rejection is no longer applicable.

Referring to the rejection of claims 1-11 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Beggiao '892 in view of Van de Ven et al. '974, the above-noted references, whether considered individually or in combination, are not believed to anticipate or make obvious the specific features required by the claimed invention.

The reference to Beggiao relates to a system for processing photographic orders in a processing lab. In Beggiao '892, a circular conveyance element having pallets thereon is utilized to transport elements of a photographic order to different stations that are adapted to perform different tasks in accordance with the complexity of the task.

Claim 1 relates to a method of assembling a photofinishing customer order having at least one component for subsequent distribution to a customer which comprises the steps of: associating a customer order identification with the customer order; automatically dispensing at least one first type of component onto a first conveyor based on a customer order identification so as to form an order group on the first conveyor which includes the at least one first type of component; conveying the order group from the first conveyor to a second conveyor; automatically dispensing at least one second type of component into the order group on the second conveyor to create an assembled product group; and shrink wrapping the assembled product group.

As noted in the Office Action, the reference to Beggiao does not disclose the concept of shrink wrapping an assembled product group. The reference to Van de Ven et al. was cited to show a shrink wrapping feature. However, the reference to Van de Ven et al. is not believed to correct the deficiencies of Beggiao with respect to the claimed invention. More specifically,

as noted in the previous response, the reference to Van de Ven et al. does not provide for a shrink wrapping feature where a first and second type of component that make up part of a photofinishing order are conveyed and assembled into an order group to form an assembled product group, and thereafter the assembled product group is shrink wrapped. Van de Ven et al. relates to an apparatus wherein laser printers print documents or sheets that can be gathered into document groups or packages. These sheets are normally of the same size and orientation, and are stacked into a package that can thereafter be conveyed to shrink wrap equipment or banding equipment that applies a band or strap to the bundled sheets. Therefore, the documents that are wrapped in Van de Ven et al. are the same type of products, i.e. paper sheets, and are not photographic based type of products which are the result of a photofinishing customer order and can be distinct type of products and shapes as described in the present invention.

Absent Applicants' disclosure, one having ordinary skill in the art would not have modified the reference to Beggiao which relates to placing photographic products in pallets and sending the products to a user operated finishing station with a shrink wrapping arrangement as taught by Van de Ven et al. More specifically, there is no showing or suggestion in the reference to Van de Ven et al. of providing for the shrink wrapping of a photographic based assembled product group of the type required by the claimed invention.

Accordingly, the references to Beggiao and Van de Ven et al., whether considered individually or in combination, are not believed to anticipate or make obvious the specific features required by claim 1.

Claims 2-11 depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1 and set forth further unique features of the present invention which are also not believed to be shown or suggested in the applied references.

For example, claim 2 requires that the at least one first type of component includes at least one of an order bag, an APS package, negatives, an index card, individual prints and digital products; while claim 3 requires that the at least one first type of component includes digital products, and that the digital products comprise at least one of a photo CD or a floppy disk. The applied references do not show or suggest the conveyance of the claimed specific type of products to form an assembled product group, and thereafter, shrink wrapping the assembled product group.

Claims 4-7 define further unique features of either the first type of component or the second type of component which are also not believed to be shown or suggested in the applied references.

Claim 8 further defines the method of dispensing the at least one first type of component onto the first conveyor as requiring the steps of

dispensing an order bag on the first conveyor to start the order group; dispensing an APS package into the order group, with the APS package being dispensed on top of the order bag already on the first conveyor; cutting prints created from negatives; banding the cut prints; and dispensing the cut and banded prints into the order group, with the cut and banded prints being dispensed on top of the APS package. None of the applied references, whether considered individually or in combination, teach the specific dispensing method of claim 8, wherein the elements of the order group are dispensed in a specific order and one on top of the other as required claim 8.

Claim 9 defines further unique features of the dispensing of the first type of component as required by claim 8.

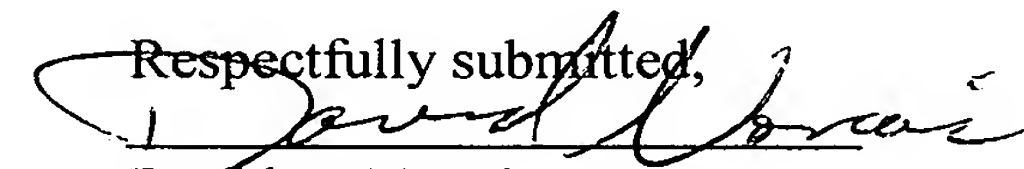
Claim 10 sets forth features of the dispensing of the second type of component and requires that the process comprises dispensing at least promotional and wallet inserts, coupons and an upload card on top of an uppermost one of a floppy disk and a photo CD in the order group; and dispensing a backing card on top of the uppermost one of the promotional wallet inserts, coupons or an upload card in the order group. The applied references are not believed to show or suggest the specific variety of dispensed components as required by each of claims 8, 9 and 10, wherein the components are dispensed one on top of the other; and further as required by claim 1, wherein the components of the assembled product group are shrink wrapped.

Claim 11 sets forth a further unique feature of the method of the present invention and requires the step of heat sealing the shrink wrapped assembled product group by conveying the assembled product group through a heat tunnel.

Accordingly, each of the dependent claims 2-11 are also believed to be allowable over the applied references, whether the references are considered individually or in combination.

In view of the foregoing comments, it is submitted that the inventions defined by each of claims 1-11 are patentable, and a favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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